

From: Michael Horowitz
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/28/02 12:24pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Hello,

One complication in this case is defining what a computer Operating System(OS) is. Microsoft keeps adding features to Windows and every time it does, it stretches the meaning of the term "Operating System". What Microsoft sells now is not so much an OS, but a combination of an OS and assorted applications.

No doubt you are aware that what Microsoft does in expanding the scope of the OS is tantamount to what, in other contexts, is called "dumping". It is as if Toyota started selling its cars for \$3,000 instead of \$19,000 to drive Ford Motor out of business. This is exactly what Microsoft does and has done many many times. They can do it because they are rich enough and because the incremental cost of software is almost zero, brutally different from an automobile. This case may have been about web browsers, but people in the computer field have seen Microsoft use the same tactic (give away software to kill the competition) many times.

MY SUGGESTION:

I suggest that development of Windows be assigned to a separate company that is restricted to developing an Operating System in the strictest sense of the term. This will require monitoring by an independent entity as to just what features and applications belong in the base OS and which are considered external applications (more on this below). I'm not sure if this separate Windows OS only company should be for profit or not.

This would let Microsoft add whatever features and applications they want to the core OS and sell a product called Microsoft's Windows. However, Dell and Compaq and Gateway and IBM would also be free to add whatever features and applications they wanted to the core OS and sell it as their version of Windows. Any software company should be free to license the core Windows OS and add whatever features and applications they want and sell it on the open market. Each company selling a version of Windows would compete based on price, their reputation for quality software and support, and the features and applications they chose to include. This, by the way, is how Linux is sold with the exception that the core Linux OS is free. I am not suggesting that the core Windows OS be free.

Drawing the line between the core Windows OS and extra-add-on applications could be a full-time job. In the case of word processing for example, it seems obvious that Notepad and WordPad are not full-blown word processors and therefor could be included in the core OS. In contrast, Word and WordPerfert are full featured word processors and therefore falls into the category of a seprate application.

In other areas the distinction will not be so easy to make. If a program to play sound files can have 100 features, which of those features qualify for a bare-bones

version that can be in the core OS and how many features does a program need before it qualifies as a full-blown application that can not be included in the core OS? Someone will need to decide.

That's my 2 cents. Thanks.

Michael Horowitz